
Pee Dee Healthy Start

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7 March 2014

Letter – Expression of Interest VIA ECFS

Chairman Thomas Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Jonathan Chambers
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW 20024
Washington, DC

Re: Expression of Interest – Rural Broadband Experiments Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners, and Mr. Chambers:

This letter is to express Pee Dee Healthy Start Inc.’s interest in participating in the Rural Broadband Experiments announced at the January 30th FCC Open Meeting. While we do not have a project to propose, we take this opportunity to document our Pee Dee Region’s need for high-speed Internet service. We respectfully ask the Federal Communications Commission to consider our area’s need when making decisions regarding the Rural Broadband Trials and any future initiatives related to the Connect America Fund.

Background

While the overall 2008-2012 median family income for South Carolinians was \$44,623, this average is much lower than the national median of \$53,046 for the same period of time. When compared to the median family income in the targeted project area, the decline ranges from \$25,174 to \$41,738 for the same period. The ranges are based on the lowest and highest in the seven (7) counties. The economically disadvantaged disparity is not only substantiated by the median income for the target area being lower than the state and national averages, but also by the unemployment rate. Of the population 16 years of age and over in South Carolina, 63 percent were in the labor force in 2000 and 37 percent were not in the labor force. The table below shows the rates per county that the target area exceeds the State’s six (6) percent rate.

Unemployment Rates per Target Area

County	Unemployment Rate	Amount Target Area Exceeds State's Unemployment Rate
Chesterfield	9.7	3.7
Darlington	8.7	2.7
Dillon	9.0	3.0
Florence	7.9	1.9
Marion	10.8	4.8
Marlboro	8.2	2.2
Williamsburg	10.0	4.0

Likewise, the poverty rates among African Americans in the seven counties range from 28.7% to 35.1% while the poverty rates of whites range from 8.1% to 14.6% reflecting disparities. African American children are three times more likely to live 100% of the poverty level than white children in the targeted area. The population below 18 years of age in South Carolina, 32.5% children was African American and 9.5% were white children.

Poverty Level: The Pee Dee Region is a community in need of educational and economical opportunity and revitalization. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 married-couple families are less likely to live in poverty than single householder families, and women are more likely than men to have incomes below poverty. In South Carolina in 1999, 5 percent of married couple-families lived below the poverty level, compared with 14.4 percent of single male householder families and 30.6 percent of single female householder families. In Dillon County in 1999, 9.3 percent of married couple-families lived below the poverty level, compared with 23.4 percent of single male householder families and 39.2 percent of single female householder families. In Florence County, 6.2 percent of married couple-families lived below the poverty level, compared with 15.7 percent of single male householder families and 33.4 percent of single female householder families. And in Marlboro County, 8.9 percent of married couple-families lived below the poverty level, compared with 17.3 percent of single male householder families and 36.3 percent of single female householder families. The association of poverty with lack of funds to access health and prenatal care is a common misconception. PDHS is committed to assisting regional residents gain access to available community resources to increase the number of pregnant women in early and continued prenatal care. In addition, PDHS is committed to ensuring that all children are receiving well childcare and are appropriately immunized by age two. Extended services will include transportation and appointment scheduling assistance. PDHS has a long established relationship with the South Carolina Department of Social Services Family Independence Program and Project HOPE. This partner targets women ages 18-24 and provides them with workforce readiness training.

Educational Levels: According to data provided by the Children's Trust of South Carolina, from 2007-2011, South Carolina had 18.5% of persons 18-24 who did not complete high school. Every county in the PDHS Project area exceeded the state rate in persons ages 18-24 who did not complete high school. From 2007-2011, a breakdown by county is: Chesterfield, 29.0%; Darlington, 24.4%; Dillon, 22.6%; Florence, 19.7%; Marion, 28.2%; Marlboro, 39.9% and Williamsburg, 24.8% . PDHS will work with this population to increase the number of persons between the ages of 18-24 to complete high school and get a diploma.

Employment Status: The Civilian Labor Forces and Employment indicate that the Unemployment rates for the targeted areas are much higher than the unemployment rate for the

state of South Carolina. In 2007 the target counties unemployment rates were as follows: Chesterfield, 7.7; Darlington, 6.5; Dillon, 9.3; Florence, 6.3; Marion, 11.4; Marlboro, 12.2, and Williamsburg, 8.9. In 2008, the unemployment rates were: Chesterfield, 8.9; Darlington, 8.5; Dillon, 10.2; Florence, 7.0; Marion, 13.6, Marlboro, 12.4 and Williamsburg, 10.3. In 2009, the unemployment rates were: Chesterfield, 16.8; Darlington, 13.2; Dillon, 15.6; Florence, 11.3; Marion, 20.7, Marlboro, 19.7 and Williamsburg, 14.8. The state unemployment rate for 2007 was 5.6%; in 2008 6.8%; and in 2009 11.5%. (*Source, South Carolina Department of Employment and Workforce*). Lack of employment with its associated lack of insurance and readily accessible health care is has been found to have correlation to inadequate health and prenatal care. PDHS is committed to assisting individuals and families with needs to access available resources, such as Medicaid applications, access to nutrition (WIC), and other community resources to help with housing and clothing.

Health Behaviors and Environmental Factors: The isolation of residents in the Pee Dee area is a major problem that is best conveyed by considering the proportion of residents lacking two principle links to services, a telephone and transportation. More than 1 in 4 minority households and approximately 1 in 10 white households lack access to a vehicle; therefore, transportation is a major barrier. Approximately 8.5 % of the total households in the Pee Dee Region lack telephones specifically; Chesterfield, 7.0%, Darlington, 6.4%, Dillon, 10%, Florence 4.8% Marion, 9.0%, Marlboro, 10.6%, and Williamsburg, 9.5%. This means that residents have difficulties scheduling or rescheduling health care appointments and handling other emergencies. An average of 9.0 percent of occupied housing units in South Carolina do not have a car which means that arrangements must be pre-scheduled for transportation. The Pee Dee region also has a high incidence of chronic disabling diseases such as heart disease, obesity, hypertension, stroke, cancer, asthma, infant mortality, and sickle cell trait.

Geographic Territory

The targeted rural PDHS project area is home to 380,780 people (U.S. Census 2010) who are dispersed across 4,468 square miles. See Table 1 below.

Table 1- Healthy Start Counties -Physical Description and Population Density

Geographic area	Population	Housing Units	Area in square miles			Density per square Mile of land area	
			Total Area	Water Area	Land Area	Population	Housing Units
Chesterfield	46,734	21,634	805.7	6.7	799.08	58.5	26.7
Darlington	68,681	30,291	566.8	5.7	561.2	122.4	53.9
Marion	33,062	14,875	494.1	4.9	489.23	67.6	30.4
Williamsburg	34,423	15,277	937	2.9	934.16	36.8	16.3
Dillon County	32,062	13,742	406.54	1.7	404.87	79.2	33.9
Florence County	136,885	58,943	803.7	3.8	799.96	171.1	73.7
Marlboro County	28,933	12,008	485	6	479.67	60.3	25.0
Targeted Area	380,780	166,770	4,498.84	31.7	4468.17	595.9	259.9
South Carolina	4,723,723	2,156,705	31,189	1078	30,111	153.9	71.6

Proposed technology

PDHSI and its partners have not identified the particular type of technology, speed, nor did costs that our community would request assistance with to see provide with from this grant. We will request technical assistance from the FCC to help us navigate our best options given our geography and reach of the project area to achieve the goals of our project area.

Existing Providers

There are a number of existing providers in the seven county areas. They range from cable companies to telephone services according to the county. Examples of existing providers are: Time Warner Cable, AT&T, Verizon, Sandhills Telephone Cooperative, FTC, and Sprint.

The pricing ranges are all over the board and therefore there is a need for affordable service options for the residents, many who live in poverty.

Local or Tribal Government Participation

There are municipalities (town and city councils), as well as county governments that exist within the seven counties identified.

List of Anchor Institutions

Schools: Public Schools in Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion, Marlboro and Williamsburg Counties. There are private schools that are church related and some charter schools.

Libraries: Each county has a public library. In some counties, there are branch offices, i.e. Florence County has a main library in Florence and one is listed in each of the five towns.

Healthcare: There is a county health department in each county

City offices: There is a city hall office in each of the towns within the county. The capacity varies by population and budget.

Community Centers: Each county has a county recreation facility, and according to the municipality within the county, there is a city recreation facility for youth to be involved. There is access to a Boys and Girls Club in each county.

Thank you for considering our Expression of Interest in your decisions about the amount of funding that will be allocated in the Rural Broadband Experiments. We commend the FCC in this effort to connect rural communities and are ready to help you close the digital divide.

Sincerely,



Madie Robinson
Executive Director/CEO
Pee Dee Healthy Start Inc.